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Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 2 July 2015

29/8. Strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as other relevant human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery,

Reaffirming its resolution 24/23 of 27 September 2013 and General Assembly resolution 69/156 of 18 December 2014,

Recalling the commitment to the full and effective implementation of and follow-up to all other relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies,

Reaffirming the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences,

Acknowledging the relevance and importance of regional instruments and mechanisms in the prevention and elimination of child, early and forced marriage,

Welcoming regional initiatives to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage, such as the Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa of the African Union, the Regional Action Plan to End Child Marriage in South Asia and the Kathmandu Call for Action to End Child Marriage in South Asia,

Welcoming also the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage,[1] and taking note of its summary report on the panel discussion on preventing and eliminating

[1] A/HRC/26/22 and Corr.1.

child, early and forced marriage, held during the twenty-sixth session,[2] and the summary report of the panel discussion held by the General Assembly on 5 September 2014, during its sixty-eighth session,

Taking note of joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices,[3]

Recognizing that child, early and forced marriage is a harmful practice that violates, abuses and impairs human rights and is linked to and perpetuates other harmful practices and human rights violations and that such violations have a disproportionately negative impact on women and girls, and underscoring the human rights obligations and commitments of States to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls and to prevent and eliminate the practice of child, early and forced marriage,

Bearing in mind that, according to the United Nations Children's Fund, approximately 15 million girls are married every year before the age of 18, and more than 700 million women and girls alive today were married before their eighteenth birthday,

Recognizing that child, early and forced marriage constitutes a serious threat to multiple aspects of the physical and psychological health of women and girls, including but not limited to their sexual and reproductive health, significantly increasing the risk of early, frequent and unintended pregnancy, maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity, obstetric fistula and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, as well as increasing vulnerability to all forms of violence, and that every girl and woman at risk of or affected by these practices must have equal access to quality services such as education, counselling, shelter and other social services, psychological, sexual and reproductive health-care services and medical care,

Recognizing also that child, early and forced marriage is itself a barrier to sustainable development and contributes to perpetuating the cycle of poverty and that the risk of child, early and forced marriage is also highly exacerbated in conflict and humanitarian crisis situations,

Deeply concerned by the impact of deep-rooted gender inequalities, norms and stereotypes and of harmful practices, perceptions and customs that are obstacles to the full enjoyment of human rights, in particular of women and girls, and are among the primary causes of child, early and forced marriage,

Deeply concerned also that poverty and lack of education are also among the drivers of the practice of child, early and forced marriage, and recalling the fact that child, early and forced marriage is a significant obstacle to access to and/or completion of women's and girls' education,

Recognizing that child, early and forced marriage remains an impediment not only to the economic, legal, health and social status of women and girls but also to the development of society as a whole, and that the empowerment of and investment in women and girls, the meaningful participation of girls in all decisions that affect them, and women's full, equal and effective participation at all levels of decision-making are a key factor in breaking the cycle of gender inequality and discrimination, violence and poverty and are critical for, inter alia, sustainable development, peace, security, democracy and inclusive economic growth,

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[2] A/HRC/27/34.

[3] CEDAW/C/GC/31-CRC/C/GC/18.

Recognizing also that the complex and challenging nature of child, early and forced marriage necessitates the collective efforts of Governments, lawmakers, judicial authorities, law enforcement officials, traditional and religious leaders, civil society, the media, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to address the root causes of this practice that exists in different economic, social and cultural settings,

Recognizing further the need for national action plans, strategies and policies to end child, early and forced marriage, and coordination mechanisms and multi-sectoral interventions that aim to prevent and eliminate the practice of child, early and forced marriage, including through national comprehensive strategies to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children and women,

Recognizing that birth registration and marriage, divorce and death registration are part of a comprehensive civil registration system that facilitates the development of vital statistics and the effective planning and implementation of programmes and policies intended to promote better governance and to achieve internationally agreed development goals, and that the absence of compulsory registration of customary and religious marriages is a major stumbling block for the implementation of existing legislation and other initiatives to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage,

Recognizing also that raising awareness of the harmful consequences of child, early and forced marriage, including among men and boys, often contributes to promoting social norms that support efforts by girls and their families to delay the age of marriage,

1. *Recognizes* that child, early and forced marriage constitutes a violation, abuse or impairment of human rights and a harmful practice that prevents individuals from living their lives free from all forms of violence, and that it has wide-ranging and adverse consequences for the enjoyment of human rights, such as the right to education and the right to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual and reproductive health;

2. *Calls upon* States, with the participation of relevant stakeholders, including girls, women, religious and community leaders, civil society and human rights groups, men and boys, and youth organizations to develop and implement holistic, comprehensive and coordinated responses, strategies and policies to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage, and to support already married girls, adolescents and women, including through the strengthening of child protection systems, protection mechanisms, such as safe shelters, access to justice and legal remedies and the sharing of best practices across borders in full compliance with international human rights obligations and commitments;

3. *Urges* States to enact, enforce, harmonize and uphold laws and policies aimed at preventing and ending child, early and forced marriage, protecting those at risk and supporting already married women and girls, and to ensure that marriage is entered into only with the informed, free and full consent of the intending spouses and that women have equality with men in all matters pertaining to marriage, divorce, child custody and the economic consequences of marriage and its dissolution;

4. *Calls upon* States to exercise due diligence in investigating, prosecuting and punishing violence against all children, paying particular attention to child- and gender-sensitive approaches, and to provide protection and universal access to comprehensive social, physical, mental and reproductive health, and legal services and counselling for all victims and survivors and to ensure their full recovery and reintegration into society;

5. *Urges* States to remove any provisions that may enable, justify or lead to child, early or forced marriage, including provisions that enable perpetrators of rape, sexual abuse or abduction to escape prosecution and punishment by marrying their victims, in particular by repealing or amending relevant laws;

6. *Also urges* States to ensure access to justice and accountability mechanisms and remedies for the effective implementation and enforcement of laws aimed at preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage, including by informing women and girls about their rights under relevant laws, training law enforcement officers and monitoring how they handle cases of child, early and forced marriage, improving legal infrastructure and removing all barriers to access to legal counselling, assistance and remedies;

7. *Further urges* States to strengthen their efforts to ensure free birth registration, including free or low-fee late birth registration, by means of universal, accessible, simple, expeditious and effective registration procedures, without discrimination of any kind, and marriage, divorce and death registration as part of the civil registration and vital statistics systems, especially for individuals living in rural and remote areas, including by identifying and removing all physical, administrative, procedural and any other barriers that impede access to registration and by providing, where lacking, mechanisms for the registration of customary and religious marriages;

8. *Affirms* the need for States to improve gender disaggregated data collection, research and dissemination of evidence-based and good practices relating to the prevention and elimination of child, early and forced marriage, as well as the use of quantitative and qualitative data on harmful practices, disaggregated by sex, age, disability, geographical location, socioeconomic status, education level and other key factors, and to strengthen monitoring and impact assessment of existing policies and programmes as a means of strengthening them, ensuring their effectiveness and implementation, including in the context of the post-2015 development agenda;

9. *Calls upon* States to promote the meaningful participation and active consultation of children and young people in all issues affecting them, and to create awareness about their rights, including the negative impact of child, early and forced marriage, through safe spaces, forums and support networks that provide girls and boys with information, life skills training and the opportunities to be empowered and become agents of change within their communities;

10. *Urges* States to promote awareness-raising and to engage in dialogue within communities on the health implications of child, early and forced marriage, and to improve equal access to health-care facilities and sexual and reproductive health information, education and services, including modern forms of contraception;

11. *Calls upon* States to promote and protect the rights of women and girls to education through enhanced emphasis on quality education, including human rights education and training, and catch-up and literacy education for those who have not received formal education, including in remote areas, while recognizing that education is one of the most effective ways to prevent and end child, early and forced marriage and to help already married women and men, girls and boys to make more informed choices about their lives;

12. *Urges* Governments to promote and protect the human rights of all women and girls, including their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, and to adopt and accelerate the implementation of laws, policies and programmes that protect and enable the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including reproductive rights, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences;

13. *Calls upon* States, with the support of humanitarian partners, and in full collaboration with concerned communities and other stakeholders, to strengthen monitoring and interventions to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage in humanitarian settings and fragile situations, including by integrating and harmonizing such interventions

into efforts focused on conflict prevention, protection of civilians, and access to information and services;

14. *Urges* States to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage by improving safety of girls at and on the way to and from school, including by establishing a safe and violence-free environment by improving infrastructure, such as transportation, and providing separate and adequate sanitation facilities, improved lighting, playgrounds and safe environments, and adopting policies to prohibit, prevent and address violence against children, especially girls, including sexual harassment and bullying and other forms of violence, through measures such as conducting violence prevention activities in schools and communities and establishing and enforcing penalties for violence against girls;

15. *Calls upon* States and encourages other stakeholders to address social norms, gender stereotypes and harmful practices that contribute to the acceptance and continuation of the practice of child, early and forced marriage, including by raising awareness of its harm to the victims and the cost to society at large and by providing opportunities for discussion among others, within communities, including with the involvement of unmarried girls and already married girls, adolescents and women, religious, tribal and community leaders, men and boys, and families on the benefits of delaying marriage and ensuring that girls receive education;

16. *Calls upon* States and the international community to create an environment in which the well-being of women and girls is ensured by, inter alia, cooperating, supporting and participating in efforts for the eradication of poverty, and reaffirms that investment in women and girls and the respect, protection and fulfilment of their rights are among the most effective ways to end the harmful practice of child, early and forced marriage;

17. *Urges* Governments, with the collaboration of relevant stakeholders, to tackle poverty and lack of economic opportunities for women and girls as drivers of child, early and forced marriage, including by ensuring women and girls inheritance and property rights, equal access to social protection, including direct financial support and microcredit for girls, families and guardians to encourage girls to continue their education; to develop livelihood opportunities and life skills education; and to promote women's equal access to full and productive employment and decent work, as well as equal political participation and rights to inherit, own and control land and productive resources;

18. *Also urges* Governments to take measures to support girls and women who have been subjected to child, early and forced marriage, and calls upon States and all relevant actors to strengthen, inter alia, the development, enactment, implementation and monitoring of relevant legislation and protection mechanisms, such as safe shelters, counselling and other support services, as well as empowerment programmes focusing on, inter alia, education, health, livelihood, autonomy and decision-making;

19. *Welcomes* the inclusion of a target on eliminating all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, in the outcome document of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, recognizes child, early and forced marriage as a barrier to development and to the full realization of women's and girls' human rights, and also recognizes the need to give due consideration to the inclusion of the target in the post-2015 development agenda in order to help to ensure progress towards the elimination of child, early and forced marriage;

20. *Encourages* relevant United Nations entities, regional and subregional organizations, civil society and other relevant actors and human rights mechanisms to continue to collaborate with and support Member States in developing and implementing strategies and policies at the national, regional and international levels to prevent and

eliminate child, early and forced marriage, and to support already married girls, adolescents and women;

21. *Encourages* States and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that child, early and forced marriage is given due attention in the work of the Human Rights Council, including relevant Council processes, debates and mechanisms, including the universal periodic review;

22. *Invites* relevant special procedures of the Human Rights Council and relevant treaty bodies to give due consideration to the issue of child, early and forced marriage within their respective mandates;

23. *Requests* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to organize an expert workshop before the thirty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council to review and discuss the impact of existing strategies and initiatives to address child, early and forced marriage and to make recommendations for further action by States and the international community towards the full implementation of human rights obligations in this regard;

24. *Also requests* the High Commissioner to prepare a report on the deliberations held during the workshop and to submit it to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-fifth session;

25. *Decides* to continue its consideration of the issue of strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage at its thirty-fifth session.

42nd meeting
2 July 2015

[Adopted without a vote.]